

**We are  
Onwards**



**Upwards®**

Board Recruitment Pack August 2025





## HELLO

The mission of Onwards & Upwards is to free ex-offenders from the cycle of reoffending by creating jobs that change lives for good. Our aim is simple, to bring employment rates up and reoffending rates down.

By creating trusted brands and small, beautiful and loud businesses, we mean to prove that employing ex-offenders makes business sense, and in doing so, shifting attitudes towards them.

Not every offence should lead to a life sentence.

Our first business, XO Bikes, is made up of men trained through our course, and is a vibrant and community-loved business.

XO Barbers is next on the starting blocks, with a prison workshop in place and plans underway for a finishing school, a community barbershop, and more.

Next, we will take on the clothing world, and at least two more ventures.

Perhaps most importantly we are starting a community project that will engage with and tackle youth issues in society by building relationships across community groups and hopefully start lowering the numbers of young people going into prison in the first place.



HOME | Onwards & Upwards

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# XO BIKES<sup>®</sup>



HOME | XO Bikes

**Onwards&Upwards<sup>®</sup>**

## WHAT ARE WE?

We are small, beautiful and loud.

Being small means, we are not looking to overhaul the bike industry or become the biggest name in barbering. But we are looking to make permanent change in employment culture of hiring ex – offenders and break the cycle of reoffending through offering prison leavers real opportunity in training and employment.

We choose industry sectors that are: relevant and aspirational to our prison leavers, that have real opportunities in employment, and where we fit a gap in the market that really appeals to its customers.

We make an impact through our training courses, which provide accredited training and real work experience, leading to industry leading, employable mechanics.

We provide multi-agency training, covering employment readiness masterclasses and pastoral care, as well as the technical side of the job.

We hire our trainees, not just as mechanics, but as bookkeepers, partnerships managers and trainers.





## WHAT DO WE DO?

We create bespoke, beautiful training spaces in London prisons, that provide a stark contrast to the beige walls, blue gates and multiple locked doors.

We provide a training workshop, but also a place of escapism, and a place to consider a future.

We celebrate the individual wins of our trainees and graduates, whether it's turning up on the first day, the last, and all the changes they have made in between. There is a longstanding relationship in place for those who need it and XO becomes home for many of the people who come through the door.

If they don't stay with us, they have found the confidence to go and secure a lease on a flat, or apply for the job advertised.

Our volunteers are also pretty fantastic, they complete bike rides on single speed bikes for us, they drive our vans, they coach our trainees, they run our shops and help to sell our bikes.

Together we are building a coexisting work environment made up equally of those who have been to prison, and those that haven't, with opportunities for everyone.

# XO BARBERS<sup>ⓧ</sup>



XO BARBERS | Onwards & Upwards

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# THE GREAT ESCAPE



Our mission is loud – it is a mammoth job to break both the cycle of reoffending and to restructure industries to consider unemployable people, employable.

Our graduates love being loud, telling their story and their experiences to the media, and to the men and women still in prison.

Graduates and our staff and volunteers attend all of our open days, our PR opportunities and our events. Our supporters want to hear from them, and they are great at telling everyone where they came from and what they are succeeding in now.

And our events are really good at being loud, whether it's a 250-rider charity bike ride through the Surrey Hills, a grand dinner in the Draper's Hall, or every single one of our graduations, celebrating our newest graduates.

[BBC: The London schemes giving prisoners a fresh start](#)

[Stef Jones \(XO Bikes\), Jason Koku \(Former Prisoner\), David Wilson on This Morning \[27.08.2024\] \(YouTube\)](#)





## HOW DOES IT WORK?

Onwards & Upwards is where it all started, a charity founded by Stef Jones. Volunteering at Brixton Prison led to meeting the same men who'd sworn over and over again, that this time within prison walls, was the last.

And the most common issue that led to reoffending? No chance of employment on release.

Stef's thinking was, if no one would give prison leavers a job, he would. But in order to do that, you need people that are trained in an industry, and a business to employ them into.

So XO Bikes was born, as the first trading subsidiary of Onwards & Upwards. The charity trains mechanics in prisons across London and in the Lewisham community, XO Bikes is there to employ once they have been trained. XO Bikes proves that a job isn't a handout, and proves that a bike shop run by prison leavers stands its ground in the industry. It's also there to prove that some of the best mechanics in London have been previously deemed unemployable.

With a tested model in XO Bikes, the next XO ventures are now taking shape and will become businesses in their own right, with each commercial activity acting as it's own XO company.

Not every graduate becomes an XO employee, but every XO employee is an example of the need for change.

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## WHO ARE WE LOOKING FOR?

We are looking for a maximum of two new trustees to join our excellent current Board of four, hoping to find people with real support for what we do, commitment to our mission, and the ability to help us continue to make change.

The purpose of this role is to provide excellent governance and to review our performance against our strategic objectives within the charity's mission, values and charitable objectives.

We ask for a commitment of quarterly Board meetings, which take place either in person or over teams. Individuals should be able to dedicate preparation time with prereading materials and responding to emails when requested. Meetings cover Onwards & Upwards, and a Commercial Ventures update.

We may well ask for your advice in your specialist area, or a steer on an upcoming decision, but will expect other time commitments only by agreement, for example a working group.

Trustees are welcome to attend Onwards & Upwards and XO events, meet our team and complement our relationships with stakeholders. We would expect and encourage our Board members to feel involved, consulted, and informed in everything that we do.



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OUR TRUSTEES | Onwards & Upwards





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## WHAT'S IMPORTANT TO US

Furthermore, the expectation of all our trustees is to carry out their statutory duties and holding the charity “in trust” for current and future beneficiaries by pledging:

To ensure the organisation complies with its governing document, relevant laws, and legally binding agreements with other bodies, ensuring that the charity’s governance is of the highest possible standard. To contribute actively to the Board of Trustees' role in giving firm strategic direction to the organisation, defining goals and setting targets, monitoring strategy, and evaluating performance against agreed targets.

To ensure the organisation applies its assets and resources exclusively in pursuance of its objectives, taking all due care over their security, deployment and proper application. To safeguard the good name and values of the organisation, and to promote the profile and standing of the charity in the community.

The Trustee Board has a safeguarding trustee lead, and potential to appoint a chair in the future.



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## COMMERCIAL VENTURES BOARD

As well as being on the lookout for new Trustee Board members, we are also hoping to expand our Commercial Ventures Board. Our Ventures Board sits quarterly and acts as our sensible voice in business, allowing us to test ideas and run through projects prior to sitting down with our trustees.

We have space to recruit for another one or two Board members and would benefit from expertise in the following areas:

- Finance and Fundraising
- Our current and future ventures: bikes, barbering, fashion and fitness
- Entrepreneurship

Joining our Commercial Ventures Board would be a different experience, with a more informal workshopping session. We may come to you for general entrepreneurial advice, or to help us resolve a specific problem.

Similarly to our trustees, the Ventures Board would be invited to attend our events, welcomed as part of the team and encouraged to meet our team and discuss how you could best help them progress.







## WHAT TO DO NOW

We are committed to building an inclusive business and organisational culture and we recognise that recruitment practices play a significant role in building that organisation. We actively encourage applications from those who are Black, Asian and minoritised or who identify as disabled.

We are also committed to placing the people who have experienced life in prison at the heart of our work, and we encourage applicants with lived experience of the criminal justice system. We want to hear from candidates who could bring different perspectives and experiences to our work and make ourselves better in doing so.

We would love to hear from you if you think you might be the right fit for us, as either a trustee or on our Commercial Ventures Board. If you would like to talk either position and expectations over with one of our current Board trustees, please get in touch with [Maria@onwardsandupwards.uk](mailto:Maria@onwardsandupwards.uk) and she will put you in contact.

People are always welcome to visit, either our Lewisham training workshop and shop or our Wandsworth site, please do let us know beforehand so one of us can show you around.

And if you would like to apply, please send a CV and Expression of Interest to [Maria@onwardsandupwards.uk](mailto:Maria@onwardsandupwards.uk) by 8th September. Interviews will take place on the week commencing 29th September.



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